

Chapter One

Pitkin's Dilemma

The Wider Shores of Political Theory and Political Science

THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL THEORY

Thirty years ago in the conclusion to her study of Ludwig Wittgenstein's significance for political philosophy, Hanna Fenichel Pitkin posed a dilemma that arose from Wittgenstein's transformation of philosophical method and the impact of this change on traditional political theory. Traditional political theory, Pitkin argued, had been inherently tyrannical. Plato solved the political problem "by eliminating politics" and theorized justice "by eliminating the need for, and thus the real nature of" justice. But leaving Plato aside, as one often criticized for totalitarian tendencies,¹ Pitkin found that even a Rousseau or a Marx, both committed to human liberation, followed the same pattern: "There seems to be something in the enterprise of theorizing itself that makes the resulting system seem totalitarian and in that sense nonpolitical. The theorist stands outside the political system about which he speculates and writes; of necessity he deploys and manipulates its citizens without considering their wishes or opinions" (Pitkin 1993: 326). In the attempt to create intellectual order, the theorist simultaneously *imposes* order on individuals. It is, Pitkin concludes, not easy "to have an overview of political life, without also seeing in a . . . basically nonpolitical way—without seeing other men as objects and oneself as the only person" (Pitkin 1993: 327).

This is the ancient issue of the relationship between knowledge and power, and relates not only to classical political theorists but to current methodological issues in political science. While the behavioral revolution's rift between political science and political theory leads us to separate the normative, the positive, and the empirical, Pitkin's dilemma transcends these divisions, reaching to the

basic issue of human knowledge about human affairs, and theory's innate tendency to tell people how they should see the world and their own place in it.

The dilemma arises, however, not simply because theorists impose order. If that were so, the solution would be to stop doing political theory altogether.² This would fail to meet Pitkin's problem because, as she writes, "without some foundation in stable truth, men are unable to orient themselves toward the world or toward each other and hence lack a stable sense of self."³ Her question is whether a Wittgensteinian-inspired theory, a "piecemeal" theory that emphasizes "partial overviews" and ad hoc solutions, can be intellectually satisfying, can provide "the sense of coherence and mastery" people need in their political lives and actions (Pitkin 1993: 326, 328). Pitkin sought escape from the dilemma she had posed through philosophy, but found this inadequate. She turns, on the final page of the book, to Wittgenstein's idea that the problems of the human condition are not to be solved by philosophy but only by individual actions. "If [our lives] are to change, we must change them in our actions, in our lives; and ultimately that means we cannot change them in isolation."⁴ "A Wittgensteinian approach . . . requires of us, that we take other people, and other cultures, *seriously*, that . . . we become able to see from the perspective of another. But it also makes possible, and requires of us, that we take ourselves seriously" (Pitkin 1993: 339). What is required is a framework within which such exploration can proceed, providing meaningful guidance without imposing predetermined answers.

Pitkin's challenge has not gone unnoticed in the political theory discipline,⁵ but, to my knowledge, no one has proposed a concrete empirical approach to the problem she posed, and it is toward this goal that the present chapter is directed. I will suggest that a major barrier against the development of an individual-level, nonauthoritarian political theory and political science appropriate to the democratic experience is the conventional assumption that 'the state' is equivalent to 'the political.'⁶ If political theory is limited to the study and justification of the state, then it is very difficult to see how citizens, in their very narrow civic roles, can be anything but subordinate players, objects for the theories of other people. But if it is recognized that political experience is present in everyday human relationships, whenever there is an asymmetrical or potentially asymmetrical relationship between individuals, then the field of political science in general, and of political theory in particular, expands in interesting ways. Individual people, in all their idiosyncratic variety, replace the abstract, neutral citizen. A wide variety of human behavior, from the high-spirited to the underhanded, replaces the narrow right to vote. Individual self-government replaces state-centered hierarchical control. Instead of an abstract and skeletal political system, such a viewpoint reveals fully defined political people participating constantly in fully political environments that have no direct relation to the state and its institutions but are political in their determination of "who gets what, when, and how."⁷

The idea that strategic interactive behavior is the central phenomenon of politics is of course not new, but developments in the modern social sciences and social philosophy give us the opportunity to pursue the approach with new vigor. It needs to be emphasized before we go any further that I am not here proposing we become anarchists. The state is a fact, and will continue as a fact no matter what philosophers say about it; political theory will continue to pay the state appropriate attention; and citizens will continue to exercise their rights and duties under the state. But, for the average person, the modern democratic state, whatever its size, leaves a large amount of space empty. It is often urged that this 'private' space is our own, our locus of perfect freedom, our arena for self-satisfactions of whatever sort we choose.⁸ This book seeks to counter this conventional interpretation. I will argue that the supposedly empty, personal, nonpolitical space is actually political, and that everyday citizens in their apparently private lives are constantly engaged in power relations with one another. This is not in abstract conceptual terms but in empirical and sometimes unseemly political practice where sharp strategy may prevail even in the most private games. To explain why this change in viewpoint seems perhaps unexpected requires a brief step back into the theory of democratic politics.

Modern political theory⁹ has been defined by its focus on the state as the essence of the political since the work of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. This definition was brought into the twentieth century by Max Weber, with the idea of the state's having the right of legitimate force over a geographic area,¹⁰ and was brought into behavioral political science by David Easton, who defined politics as "the authoritative allocation of values *for a society*."¹¹ This otherwise very broad and useful definition is made conventional by the final clause, "for a society," which seems to restrict allocation to only the official government level. Only recently the centrality of the state in the discipline of political science has been reaffirmed in the American Political Science Association's survey of political science over the past decade, which uses the state as a major thematic focus (Katznelson and Milner 2002; especially Part I: "The State in an Era of Globalization": 27–230). While postmodernists have sought to deconstruct the state, and historians and political scientists have complained about its unacceptably royal nature and its negative influence on political research (Mitchell 1991, Engster 2001, Bartelson 2001), overall the state retains its centrality as the focus of the political.¹²

This consensus frequently involves a second dimension, that the state is preferable to politics, that the state is 'the solution' to politics.¹³ Yet the well-documented decline in voting, not only in the United States but in other advanced industrial democracies, suggests that many citizens have lost some of their old enthusiasm for the government as an object of democratic participation.¹⁴ In large part this attitude may result from the growing sophistication of the electorate. Under the aegis of the modern liberal democratic state, citizens

have markedly increased in economic, social, and educational resources over the past half-century. From this new and privileged position they have been able to scrutinize their institutions more carefully, and have often found those institutions inadequate. It is these sociopolitical changes that suggest the possibility of expanding the scope of the democratic experience by recognizing that politics occurs universally in human relationships, in every interaction between individual persons.¹⁵ Giving politics this wider definition provides clues into solving Pitkin's dilemma, the articulating of a political theory that provides intellectual order and perhaps guidance to individual activity, yet is integral to the participants rather than imposed from outside.¹⁶ The central framework is that of an open-ended strategic process through which individual women and men attempt, with uncertain chances of success, to define themselves, their goals, and their place in society. The process is political in that it allocates values, but it is controlled by no outside authority; individual women and men create it by their own efforts, from the bottom up.

The contemporary philosopher who has shown the greatest attention to the widest possible definition of politics is Michel Foucault, who did so much to bring madness, criminality, and sexuality into intellectual consideration, and who late in his career turned to questions of self-government and politics, using power as his central philosophical concept.¹⁷ To those familiar with his work, Foucault may seem an inappropriate choice as a theorist of micro-level politics because he is so well known for his studies of the 'disciplinary' society, from whose surveillance none escape.¹⁸ Foucault himself argued against any inconsistency, on the grounds that a proper understanding of his ideas showed discipline and freedom to be two sides of one coin. But, to make this argument fully clear, I believe we must stop treating Foucault solely as a philosopher and recognize his role as a social scientist, which is the realm in which his political analysis proceeds and from which his conclusions follow. Foucault's contribution at this micropolitical level is to bring a variety of well-known sociological and empirical facts into philosophical focus. Where Foucault is less successful is in tracing the empirical, sociopolitical microprocesses in which everyday people engage and in which winners and losers are defined. In this respect, therefore, I bring together several classic sociological works, and others in political economy, to fill out Foucault's political model. Students of the state have tried to avoid this micropolitics as being too confusing or inchoate to be amenable to scientific study. I argue that this is no longer so, and that philosophy and the social sciences converge to provide a viable empirical model.

One cannot help recognizing that such an inquiry will be seen as controversial, an egregious example of mixing French philosophical apples with American sociopolitical oranges, but I do not think this criticism should deter the exercise. The Foucault interview discussed here gains in power as social theory by being given empirical explication; American scholars are enriched by

being placed in Foucault's large ethical framework. In themselves these American works have been deeply original, but their implications have been difficult to assess. Bringing the two traditions into conjunction is therefore effective in assessing resolution of the objective-subjective dilemma of political theory, the search for theory that is intellectually coherent but not coercive.¹⁹ Foucault provides an axiomatic base; Garfinkel adds experiential depth, Goffman reveals the constant challenge of social interaction, and Schelling reminds us that winning and losing create the realities within which individuals live.

FOUCAULT'S PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT

The breadth and diversity of Foucault's published books, lectures, and interviews have meant that no unified interpretation of his work has yet emerged. Canguilhem is considered authoritative on the early period, Hadot essential to the understanding of the final period, and Deleuze essential if not definitive on the middle period.²⁰ The reception of Foucault among American political theorists has focused on his theory of the disciplinary society, but here, too, scholars have taken several directions in response to the concept.²¹ At one time classified with French structuralism, Foucault promptly rejected any such affiliation,²² and seemed to take pleasure in violating the expectations his audiences sought to impose.²³ The social science aspect I emphasize in this chapter is supported by two considerations: (1) Foucault's publication in French methodology journals, and (2) the way in which Foucault's politics theme ties together his work from *Madness and Civilization* through *The History of Sexuality*.²⁴ The first step in my analysis is to show how strongly Foucault himself emphasized the micropolitics theme.

In a 1984 interview, conducted five months before his death,²⁵ Foucault was questioned by interlocutors who persistently presented him with conventional abstract concepts, such as the relation between truth and power, liberalism and domination, power and evil, subject and truth; Foucault just as persistently tried to direct the discussion instead toward concrete behavior. Foucault presented a perspective that was to some degree foreign to philosophical discourse by virtue of its being more consistently microanalytical than his listeners expected or were willing to appreciate. Central to an understanding of this novel perspective is Foucault's discussion of "relationships of power."

The relationships of power have an extremely wide extension in human relations. There is a whole network of relationships of power, which can operate *between individuals, in the bosom of the family, in an educational relationship, in the political body, etc.* This analysis of relations of power constitutes a very complex field; it sometimes meets

what we can call facts or states of domination, in which the relations of power, instead of being variable and allowing different partners a strategy which alters them, find themselves firmly set and congealed. When an *individual or a social group* manages to block a field of relations of power, to render them impassive and invariable and to prevent all reversibility of movement—by means of instruments which can be economic as well as political or military—we are facing what can be called a state of domination. It is certain that in such a state the practice of liberty does not exist or exists only unilaterally or is extremely confined and limited.” (Foucault 1988:3, emphasis added)

Several points in this passage need to be emphasized. First, it should be observed that Foucault has completely abolished the conventional limits on the types of power typically studied by theorists and philosophers, that is, power in the state or its rulers, or system-wide economic power. Foucault instead emphasizes repeatedly that *every* human interaction involves the relations of power, giving as an example the very interview in which he is participating, in which at one point he has precedence as being the older, more mature scholar, yet in a moment he may lose that position faced with a critical challenge from an upcoming, younger man (Foucault 1988: 12).²⁶ This ubiquity of the relations of power remains a persistent theme to the end of Foucault's discussion in the course of this interview.²⁷

The second point of particular interest in the quoted passage is its distinction of relations of power and states of domination, which Foucault says later are frequently mixed up and used interchangeably only because we fail to define our terms (Foucault 1988:19). States of domination are but a subset of relations of power, according to the model Foucault defines here. He uses, he says, the term “power” in a way quite different from the way most people use it as suggesting “political structure, a government, a dominant social class, the master facing the slave.” Instead, Foucault uses power only as a shortcut for ‘relations of power’ and means by this “that in human relations, whatever they are—whether it be a question of communicating verbally . . . or a question of a love relationship, an institutional or economic relationship—power is always present . . . the relationships in which one wishes to direct the behavior of another” (Foucault 1988:11). The essence of such relationships is that they exist “at different levels, under different forms,” and they are “changeable relations, i.e., they can modify themselves, they are not given once and for all” (Foucault 1988:12). The criterion that distinguishes between relations of power and states of domination is the availability of complete change in the relationship, the ability of participants to invert the relation so that roles are effectively and substantively reversed.²⁸

Foucault's third important point in the quoted paragraph, beyond the ubiquity of relations of power and their difference from states of domination, is

the importance of the “whole network of relations,” the “complex field” in which human beings operate. This is the point at which listeners to or readers of the interview seem forced to ask if Foucault is not here doing something quite different from standard philosophy; indeed, one of the interlocutors in the 1984 interview asked Foucault whether his approach might be “the center of a new philosophical thought, of another kind of politics than the one we are seeing today.” Foucault shied away from this suggestion, but did admit that his interest in Greek and Roman experience reflected a shift from the traditional approach to political philosophy characteristic of Hobbes and Rousseau (Foucault 1988:13–14).

Much of the interview centers on these ancient ethical relations under the second major aspect of Foucault’s philosophical model, the well-known “care of the self” that occupied so much of his concern in the late Collège de France lectures. Where to an American reader the individualism of the phrase, care of self, seems culturally familiar—if not in quite the sense Foucault used it—to his interviewers it was difficult to understand or accept. After being told firmly by Foucault that care of the self is “ethical in itself,” quite independent from any associated care for others, an interviewer pushes him to affirm that “care for self always aims at the good for others.” Foucault fights off this interpretation, insisting that “the relationship to self takes ontological precedence” in his model (Foucault 1988:7). The reader, considering the interview several decades after it was recorded, can see in this struggle between a philosopher and his audience the difficulties that arise when paradigm shifts are under way; in Foucault’s case, the shift from traditional, highly abstract philosophy to what might today be called agent-centered modeling.²⁹

What Foucault means by care of self is most fully explicated in the second and third volumes of his *History of Sexuality* (Foucault 1985, 1986), but the 1984 interview highlighted the structure and context of the idea of relations of power perhaps better than the fuller work. Foucault in the interview restates the basic theme, that for the ancient Greeks care for self meant knowing and improving one’s self and the effort “to surpass one’s self, to master the appetites that risk engulfing you.” Knowledge is essential to this project, both in the Socratic-Platonic sense and in “the knowledge of a certain number of rules of conduct or of principles which are at the same time truths and regulations. To care for self is to fit one’s self out with these truths. That is where ethics is linked to the game of truth” (Foucault 1988: 5). Foucault then states the political conclusion of his whole argument: “relations of power,” defined as the “means by which individuals try to conduct, to determine the behavior of others,” cannot be eliminated from society. “The problem is not of trying to dissolve them in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one’s self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the *ethos*, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be

played with a minimum of domination" (Foucault 1988:18). The interviewers bring up Sartre's 'power is evil,' but Foucault is not to be turned. "Power is not an evil. Power is strategic games." The essence of an open strategic game is "where things could be reversed"; the relations of power are "strategic games between liberties," resulting from "the fact that some people try to determine the conduct of others" (Foucault 1988:18). Power comes at several levels, Foucault adds, but while government is a major source of domination, relations of power between individuals exist everywhere, even to the apparent privacy of the home and the most personal relations; his typical example, in the interview as elsewhere, involves sexual relations.

Care of self enters this dynamic sociopolitical milieu because only through care for the self is the individual capable of entering freely into the strategic games of power and truth. The point of resistance to political power, a state of domination, involves the relationship of self to self but also the practices as a whole "by which one can constitute, define, organize, instrumentalize the strategies which individuals in their liberty can have in regard to each other." It is free individuals "who try to control, to determine, to delimit the liberty of others and, in order to do that, they dispose of certain instruments to govern others" (Foucault 1988:18-19).

Finally, Foucault is asked whether philosophy has anything to say about *why* people try to determine others' conduct. Foucault says this will take different forms in different societies; in some, things are so well settled in advance "that there is nothing left to do." On the other hand, in our society, in family, in sexual and affective relations, there are many opportunities for games and "thus the temptation to determine the conduct of others is that much greater." The more people are free in relation to each other, the greater the temptation on both sides. "The more open the game, the more attractive and fascinating it is" (Foucault 1988:20). That evil is merely an artifact of the *libido ludendum* is surely a startling conclusion to the interview, and an indicator of how far readers must go in the attempt to catch up with Foucault's forays beyond the usual philosophical boundaries. His axiomatic demonstration that politics is inherent in individual behavior, not restricted to closed state institutions, lays down the primary axiom relevant to responding to Pitkin's problem of autocratic theory.

EMPIRICAL SOCIOLOGY AND POLITICAL ACTION

Foucault complains in this 1984 interview that as a young scholar he had objected to existentialism and phenomenology because of the way they begin with a predefined theory of the subject and construct theories of truth not analytically but along preconceived lines. Foucault himself, as a university teacher

for many years, sought to escape this philosophical trap through specialization in experimental psychology;³⁰ he was also familiar with American microsociology.³¹ While Foucault's concern with power and strategy might suggest that this chapter could directly turn to political economy, I believe a full appreciation of his argument benefits from a consideration of the movement within American sociology that was variously called social psychology, microsociology, ethnomethodology, or the psychology of interpersonal relations.³²

Perhaps the most radical analysis of the microsocial milieu was undertaken by Harold Garfinkel, who published his *Studies in Ethnomethodology* in 1967, and my analysis of social scientists useful in the understanding of Foucault's politics begins with this work,³³ which so closely examines the lived experience of ordinary folk, and reveals thereby the creativity and courage involved in such experience. Where traditional sociology defined social systems as objective realities, Garfinkel was awed instead by the contingency, the creativity, the subjectivity, and the inherent mystery of social systems. He saw social behavior not as a thing that was simple and concrete and self-evident, but as a complex, ephemeral, and almost miraculous process by which ordinary individuals contrived to adjust their behavior so that coherent and reasonable social outcomes would occur. Foucault's appreciation of the delicacy of relations of power is made concrete in Garfinkel's method.

Garfinkel's analysis often begins with a small group of individuals, frequently strangers, who are brought together to carry out some institutional task, such as admitting patients to a hospital, or conducting an investigation, or agreeing on a jury judgment in some criminal case. What struck him forcefully was that people are able to do these things, even though they have no specific experience in the matter, nor adequate instructions. Society has not completely taught them their roles, in other words, so people must figure things out for themselves through their interactions with each other, using a fund of deep, unstated knowledge on which their ambiguous discourse depends. People do not say everything they are thinking, but what they are thinking determines their ability to cope with daily situations. This "practical sociological reasoning" works from the bottom up, in Garfinkel's view, rather than from the top down. Each participant tosses forth a possible definition of what might be done in a particular case, but because phrases are incomplete and ambiguous, a consensus emerges only gradually as one person finds that her or his remarks are interpreted to mean something that person did not quite mean in the beginning, but it is too late to readjust the conversation so the modification is accepted and becomes the premise for further interaction. The picture Garfinkel presents sheds a sharp light on the way in which Foucault interpreted social discipline and how he replaced it with power strategies. Of course human experience is subject to discipline, but human life is too complicated for that discipline to be complete, so that, as Garfinkel shows, each individual must to

some extent consciously fend for herself or himself, creating and re-creating, or destroying or modifying, the parameters of the immediate social group by the specific actions that are chosen.

The uneasiness caused by Garfinkel's ethnomethodology results from the need to belong to the groups of various sizes in which circumstances force us to participate. To be members in good standing of such groups is important both for practical and symbolic reasons, and membership is based almost completely on the individual's ability to show that she or he knows the socially sanctioned facts of life, in that society, that any member knows. One's membership card, according to Garfinkel, is one's ability to demonstrate familiarity with the common understandings of "family life, market organization, distributions of honor, competence, responsibility, goodwill, income, motives among members, frequency, causes of, and remedies for trouble, and the presence of good and evil purposes behind the apparent workings of things" (Garfinkel 1967:76). Foucault could not have said it better.

Garfinkel's approach to social knowledge clearly brings out the connection between everyday activities and moral certainties. It is not the activities themselves that are important; the importance rather lies in the conclusions, moral conclusions, that activities lead us to make about members of the group and outsiders.

For Kant the moral order 'within' was an awesome mystery, for sociologists the moral order 'without' is a technical mystery. From the point of view of sociological theory the moral order consists of the rule-governed activities of everyday life. A society's members encounter and know the moral order as perceivedly normal courses of action — familiar scenes of everyday affairs, the world of daily life known in common with others and, with others, taken for granted. (Garfinkel 1967:35)

Garfinkel is concerned to make vivid to unthinking social actors how they participate actively and constantly in creating a reality that they then feel is objective, independent of them and their activity. He is particularly interested in the degree to which the 'rules' of this activity are so complex and unwritten that they can never be completely tabulated but will always require further explication by more rules, and these rules again by further rules, until the cultural milieu of even a modestly sized group or organization becomes infinite. Moreover, participants are concerned that the structures be rational, that their accounting practices will create and sustain "recognizable sense, or fact, or methodic character, or impersonality, or objectivity . . . independent of the socially organized occasions of their use" (Garfinkel 1967:3-4). For participants, "the rational properties of their practical inquiries *somehow* consist in the concerted

work of making evident from fragments, from proverbs, from passing remarks, from rumors, from partial descriptions, from ‘codified’ but essentially vague catalogues of experience,” how things were done. “*Somehow* is the problematic crux of the matter” (Garfinkel 1967:10). It would seem to be exactly in the ‘somehow’ that Foucault’s relationships of power are located. But Garfinkel is not fully sensitive to power relationships in strategic terms, and this aspect of Foucault’s vision requires amplification. Individuals create their theories not alone but within social communities that have their own logic to contribute.

COLLUSION AND POWER

The second step in my attempt to emphasize the practical political infrastructure of the philosophical viewpoint expressed so vividly in the late Foucault interview involves the work of Erving Goffman, a social scientist with whose writings Foucault was familiar (Rabinow 1984:247, 380). What Goffman adds to Garfinkel’s perspective on the ‘subject and knowledge’ is an acute sensitivity to the various forms of collusion that shape our social and intellectual lives. Foucault asserts the presence of power in every human relationship, even the most casual; Goffman documents the exact processes by which this power is manifested, and the subtle way in which human weakness and uncertainty become transmuted into strength and intelligence—or into domination and exploitation—within ongoing social interactions. Goffman will not be the end of the story because he is one-sided on the implications of power as well as its deeper malpractices, but his work forms an essential step in bringing Foucault’s always evocative but sometimes gnomic principles into clear concrete view.

The emphasis on how things are done is one to which Foucault repeatedly returns, especially in respect to care of self.³⁴ Foucault’s emphasis on rules as constitutive and deeply sociopersonal is illustrated by Goffman’s empirical studies. Goffman begins his earliest major work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, with the analysis of social situations in which individuals, in the presence of others, present themselves to one another, explicitly and implicitly, and begin in concert to develop those social regularities we call systems or institutions. Goffman uses the metaphor of theatrical performance to emphasize a perspective that was, at the time, unique: “I shall consider the way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impressions they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them” (Goffman 1959:xi). There are inadequacies to the dramaturgical model, Goffman says, in that the “stage presents things that are make-believe; presumably life presents things that are real and sometimes not well-rehearsed,” but there is also an eerie similarity. His many publications,

which achieved considerable popularity with lay audiences, attest to the fascination exerted by his unusual viewpoint on human behavior.

Goffman's approach was essentially naturalistic. Where Garfinkel indulged in reality-bending experiments, Goffman simply looked around him. There are two levels of individual expressiveness, in Goffman's analysis, what he calls "given" information such as verbal statements, and "given off" information such as actions or impressions resultant from actions (Goffman 1959:2). On meeting someone, for instance, the spoken words of the person are not the only information; one also notices physical characteristics such as clothing, manner, and the look on the other person's face as major elements in defining the situation. Individuals may have many purposes in social interaction, Goffman notes; they may wish to sustain it, to defraud the other, get rid of the other, confuse or antagonize the other, or insult the other. Whatever the specific purpose, the individual seeks to control the conduct of other people, especially their response to the self, and will attempt to project on others the impression that the self wishes them to have of herself or himself. In any interaction much will be concealed or not revealed; participants may know neither the real beliefs, nor the attitudes or emotions of the other performers (Goffman 1959:3-4).

All knowledge in these interactions is inferential, in Goffman's model, and the participants cannot know anything for certain. Each participant will, however, even if passively, project a definition of the situation, and ordinarily these definitions are sufficiently attuned so that no open contradiction occurs, although there will not be any consensus—real meeting of the minds—among the participants. Rather, each individual suppresses her or his own deepest feelings and projects a definition of the situation that she or he thinks the other will be able to find acceptable, at least temporarily. There is thus created a veneer, a surface agreement, in which everyone participates, and to which they feel obligated (Goffman 1959:9). Such behavior is of course the soil in which everyday politics grows, and such informal organization is not always benign. It is interesting that the French philosopher/theorist Foucault is so much more sensitive to the power implications of the pattern than is the American social scientist.

Like Garfinkel, Goffman emphasizes that definitions established in such social processes have a moral character. Individuals with certain characteristics have a moral right to expect that they will be valued and treated in an appropriate way. From this viewpoint, the apparently innocent idea of defining a situation turns into actions that make a moral claim on other participants (Goffman 1959:13). Goffman's distinctive contribution to microsociology is his emphasis on the social structure that controls the roles played by individual members who find expectations waiting for them and have extreme difficulty if they attempt to make major changes. Even actors who seek to change their way of fulfilling a

role will find that they cannot create novelty, but only choose among several already established ways of playing the role (Goffman 1959:28–29). The socialization process tends to idealize roles, according to Goffman, so that performances are “socialized, molded, and modified” to fit the observers’ understandings and expectations. Eventually, performers exemplify “the officially accredited values of the society” and each performance becomes a ceremony, “an expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation” of the community’s moral values, and a celebration. People who seek upward mobility within the group do this not simply for prestige but because they want “a place close to the sacred center” of the common values of the society (Goffman 1959:35–36). In other words, they play Foucault’s cultural power game, the game of truth.

Goffman would later shift his approach slightly, from the individual to the small groups of people who work together and are to some extent forced to ‘perform’ as a group for others, either audience or customers or observers. The central group, known as the team, is characterized by the familiarity of all the members with each other, by solidarity among themselves, and by a set of shared secrets about how their ‘act’ works, which would ‘give the show away’ if revealed to the audience (Goffman 1959:85–89). Social behavior, the show, takes place within a particular establishment, and the team of performers cooperates in ‘impression management,’ that is, the presentation to the audience of a desired definition of the situation.

All members of the group, team members and audience alike, willingly conspire to maintain the desired definition of the situation, which includes the conceptions of the team, the expectations of the audience, and “assumptions concerning the ethos that is to be maintained by rules of politeness and decorum” (Goffman 1959:238). A major requirement is to keep separate the back region of the establishment, which is where the performance is prepared, from the front region where the performance is actually presented; audiences do not expect to see the back region, nor does the team wish this to happen (Goffman 1959:139). While Goffman chose to focus on relatively harmless examples of this social behavior, his analysis extends easily to other situations, such as that of the overprivileged members of society justifying their position to the audience of the underprivileged, or the tyrant making an impassioned speech about democratic freedoms.

Readers who follow Goffman into his later work expecting to find a larger theoretic perspective are frequently disappointed. The corrosive analytic vision Goffman directed on everyday society continued to provide striking vignettes of amusing or appalling social behavior, but the hoped-for glimpses of a social philosophy never emerged (e.g., Goffman 1974). This is one of the reasons I believe it is valuable to bring Goffman and Foucault into the same field of scrutiny; it brings empirical evidence to the one, and philosophical resonance to the other. Foucault’s critics have been much exercised to understand how he could

simultaneously see society as disciplined and yet free. As abstract terms, freedom and discipline are contradictory; but as concrete processes they may coexist, as Goffman repeatedly shows. As Wittgenstein argued, actual practice is the only recourse when confronting philosophical dilemmas, and the rich pre-political infrastructure provided by Garfinkel and Goffman is an essential element in unraveling Pitkin's dilemma. This theme is taken further by moving to the work of political economists, who share so much of Foucault's emphasis on power and strategy, but from a different tradition and discipline that gives concrete expression to his philosophical viewpoint.

THE ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF POLITICS AND THEORY

Of the classic generation of political economists who first introduced rigorous analytical arguments into political science,³⁵ one member in particular worked consistently at the level of micropolitical issues and is therefore particularly appropriate as the social scientist who provides empirical referent to Foucault's strong yet difficult model of power relations. This was Thomas Schelling, who worked in the high tradition of foreign policy and the cold war but nonetheless directed his analytic attention to individual political behavior, usually far distant from state institutions.

The similarities between Foucault's responses in the 1984 interview and Schelling's work in strategy are striking once the step of comparison is taken. Both see power in *all* human relations; though Schelling calls it the "mixture of conflict and cooperation." Both understand games as being played within social and ideological contexts that shape and constrain them, and may mandate winners and losers independently of the merits of the play. Yet on the other hand the two write in worlds as far apart as economics and philosophy. Consideration of Schelling's work from a Foucauldian point of view sheds a doubly revealing light, showing how serious American social theory can appear when placed next to a major French thinker and how empirically acute at least one French philosopher may have been when forced to that position by the intellectual puzzles he chose to pursue.

Schelling's classic work, *The Strategy of Conflict*, was slightly mistitled; the strategy of conflict erroneously implied that his primary emphasis was conflict rather than the many other forms of human interdependence he discusses. Better titles turn up in the course of Schelling's discussion — a theory of precarious partnership, a theory of incomplete aggression, or most accurately the theory of interdependent decision.³⁶ Games of strategy are "those in which the best course of action for each players depends on what the other players do," and the term strategy "is intended to focus on the interdependence of the adversaries'

decisions and on their expectations about each other's behavior" (Schelling 1963:3). Where, traditionally, social theorists have been expected to make a choice in respect to the nature of society, to come down on one or the other side of the issue of whether society is basically competitive or basically cooperative, Schelling is at pains to emphasize that neither horn of this supposed dilemma is correct. There is no friendship so close that it cannot contain some conflict, some differences of values, he argues; nor is there any relationship so hostile that it will not contain some mutuality of interests. The "richness of the subject" arises from the "common as well as conflicting interests among the participants" (Schelling 1963:4). This firm neutrality of approach is of course exactly Foucault's.

Schelling's use of game theory in *The Strategy of Conflict* sharply distinguishes him from the majority of political economists, then and now, because he uses the theoretical concepts provided by game theory in a manner so flexible, fluid, and creative that his results often overthrow the theory's own assumptions. On the vexed issue of rationality, for instance, Schelling points out what no one else had explicitly recognized before him, that where rationality is pitted against irrationality, irrationality may work better; you cannot successfully bargain with a four-year-old, a madman, or a fool.³⁷ Schelling's insight here rests on his premise that rationality is not a one-dimensional attribute that people either have or don't, but is a multidimensional collection of attributes involving value systems, information systems, and communications systems. His approach to value systems is wide, unlike the narrow self-interest axiom of many political economists, and encompasses the whole range of motives unearthed by psychologists, sociologists, and political scientists.

Rationality is a collection of attributes, and departures from complete rationality may be in many different directions. Irrationality can imply a disorderly and inconsistent value system, faulty calculation, and inability to receive messages or to communicate efficiently; it can imply random or haphazard influences in the reaching of decisions or the transmission of them, or in the receipt or conveyance of information; and it sometimes merely reflects the collective nature of a decision among individuals who do not have identical value systems. (Schelling 1963:16)

Bargaining as Schelling defines it falls into two basic categories, explicit and tacit, which are separable analytically but inextricably mixed in practice. Both types of bargaining involve the making of threats, promises, and commitments; the creation of credibility for one's actions or threats; the minimization of one's own flexibility (notice how this counters the usual idea that flexibility

is desirable); and the search after focal points for settlement. The objective is to avoid actually using one's strengths, but instead to exploit them as potential forces. As long ago as the classic writings of Clausewitz, it was obvious that war was a waste of resources; successful threat was more efficient because it accomplished its aim without using up any goods (Schelling 1963:6-7). Foucault's facing various interviewers and recognizing the dynamics of his own situation is a micro-example of Schelling's point here.

In an argument particularly relevant to Foucault's approach to social relations, Schelling argues that, in observing groups and societies, it is not correct to think that because peace is maintained the participants must be understood to share "trust, good faith, and mutual respect." Instead, Schelling suggests, people should recognize that apparent agreement may overlay deep hostility, and that implicit bargaining is constant among participants (Schelling 1963:20). Achieving success, according to Schelling's analysis, is both conceptually simple and straightforward in practice; it results from individuals so limiting their options that they cannot do what they do not want to do. Obviously this involves some delicacy, because one must know one's opponent well enough to estimate what one can get away with, know the situation well enough to estimate what will be appropriate behavior, and know one's self well enough to know the strength of one's nerves and courage on this particular issue with this particular person. This latter aspect highlights a major aspect of political games: the individual's level of determination. Schelling describes pure bargaining as the case in which "each party is guided mainly by his expectations of what the other will accept," and where the contest is purely one of will—of bold initiative and cool head. One participant may concede because he is convinced that the other will not (Schelling 1963:13-14, 21). The psychology of this aspect of the political contest has rarely been studied in any systematic way. Foucault does not begin to handle it with Schelling's calm familiarity, which is what makes Schelling so useful in this regard.

Common opinion argues that bargaining strength means that the success of a participant is directly related to background resources, and that the weaker competitor may be forced to give way, trapped by the logic of the game's structure. In a pure contest of wills this need not be so.

'Bargaining power,' 'bargaining strength,' 'bargaining skill' suggest that the advantage goes to the powerful, the strong, or the skillful. . . . But, if the terms imply that it is an advantage to be more intelligent, or more skilled in debate, or to have more financial resources, more physical strength, more military potency, or more ability to withstand losses, then the term does a disservice. These qualities are by no means universal advantages . . . they often have a contrary value.³⁸ (Schelling 1963:22)

What gives Schelling's work its particular importance in respect to Foucault's model of the relations of power is Schelling's recognition that this political bargaining process creates not just individual deals between private persons, but in fact is the process underlying the construction of *whole political societies*. The construction of social reality is not quite the collegial process some social theorists seem to imply but is usually a game of intense and perhaps hostile bargaining. The results will determine not just who wins in the short term, but who triumphs in the long-term game of social valuation. The result of this civic battle may be to define, for a long time into the future, who is honored in a given society, who scorned, who has rights, who has only duties, who is entitled to justice, and who must eat bitterness. The deeper Schelling proceeds in his analysis, the more he leaves behind the abstractions of game theory and begins to incorporate those perspectives already presented in earlier sections of this chapter, issues of cognitive difference, personal creativity, social inequalities, and the strategic factors so decisive in bargaining.³⁹

Game theory has, according to Schelling, by pursuing "too abstract a level of analysis," "by abstracting from communications and enforcement systems, and by treating perfect symmetry between players as the general case . . . overshot the level at which the most fruitful work could be done" (Schelling 1963:119). Symmetry between two abstractly rational players is unrealistic, Schelling says, because "in too many exciting cases one plays an opponent who is a wholly different kind of person" from oneself (Schelling 1963:117). Even in the classic book that established game theory in American social science, Luce and Raiffa argued that prediction of behavior is foolish "without first having a complete psychological and economic analysis of the players" (Luce and Raiffa 1957:120; Schelling 1963:125). The conduct of a game can be altered, for instance, by one player's choice to alter her own commitment structure, where this change in commitment alters the opponent's expectations about possible payoffs and therefore constrains the opponent's options (Schelling 1963:121-122), but psychology tells us little and game theory tells us nothing about what types of players can or will make changes in their own psychological structure. One thus arrives at questions that are the prerogative of political theory, in respect to the nature of the individual and the individual's political goals and capacities.

DEMOCRATIC GAMING

An academic division of labor between philosophy, sociology, economics, and political science may be the key to increased depth of scholarship and knowledge, but it may also be Procrustean. After learning from philosophers,

sociologists, and economists that individual human beings participate 'up close and personal' in the construction of their life realities, the interested reader may naturally inquire how this model plays out in other fields of interest such as politics. Frequently the inquiry fails because the issue is not within the disciplinary purview of those who made the initial discoveries. I have therefore tried to pull together some theoretical aspects of the political interactions in which women and men find themselves, within a political system, outside its actual government but involved in daily political relations with other persons of no official capacity whatever; where the 'political' resides in the asymmetries, real or potential, of the relations, and in the allocations of social values these asymmetries entail. In conclusion, it is time to ask whether these ideas offer suggestions about the Pitkin problem of finding a theory that is embedded within people's experience and control rather than imposed from outside by an 'objective' observer, and yet has the capacity to provide meaning to human affairs and a "sense of coherence and mastery" sufficient to guide political action (Pitkin 1993:328).

The strategic politics model that is defined at the intersection of Foucault's micropower approach and the detailed empirical context provided by Garfinkel, Goffman, and Schelling seems to provide a broad epistemological metaphor appropriate to a new form of bottom-up analysis of political issues and political systems. It is a game model, but it would be incorrect to identify it with game theory as typically practiced; it might be called a Schelling Game, to emphasize the flexibility combined with rigor that is typical of his work.⁴⁰ A microtheory of this sort would not try to so simplify events that they could be squeezed into mathematical form, but would attempt to amplify our sense of the game so that it was broad enough and richly detailed enough to provide space for the many kinds of everyday politics we experience and wish to engage, either as researchers or participants. Wittgenstein, who inspired Pitkin's original work, offers examples of this approach in terms that recall Garfinkel's appreciation of people's irrepressible spontaneity.

We can easily imagine people amusing themselves in a field by playing with a ball so as to start various existing games, but playing many without finishing them and in between throwing the ball aimlessly into the air, chasing one another with the ball and bombarding one another for a joke and so on. . . .

And is there not also the case where we play and—make up the rules as we go along? And there is even one where we alter them—as we go along. (Wittgenstein 1953:39 [# 83])

Wittgenstein took this approach even further in another passage:

You are in a playing field with your eyes bandaged, and someone leads you by the hand, sometimes left, sometimes right; you have constantly to be ready for the tug of his hand, and must also take care not to stumble when he gives an unexpected tug.

Or again: someone leads you by the hand where you are unwilling to go, by force.

Or: you are guided by a partner in a dance; you make yourself as receptive as possible, in order to guess his intention and obey the slightest pressure.

Or: someone takes you for a walk; you are having a conversation; you go wherever he does.

Or: you walk along a field-track, simply following it. (Wittgenstein 1953:70 [#172])

A comparable flexibility with the nature of the game is suggested by a political scientist, Kenneth Shepsle (1995:205–206), who argues that where political scientists often implicitly equate rules with official regulations or laws, it would be preferable to be imaginatively empirical and consider how rules work in such children's games as Kick the Can or Hide and Seek, or baseball played not on a regulation lot but in a backyard with trees and brooks. Such games come with standard rules received from the past, but “kids are known to alter the rules.” Sometimes these changes respond to an irregular environment (hitting the baseball into the brook is considered a double), or the changes may reflect the type of players (young players get special help), and so on. Children may also change the rules in mid-game, as the result of conflict over some unforeseen outcome. If the argument grows sufficiently hot, some players may pack up and leave. Such situations are comparable to institution-creation, Shepsle argues, because these games are not invented behind any veil of ignorance but by players who know themselves and each other. They will therefore engage in “distributional conflicts” over different definitions of the rules and those rules' impact on profits for specific individuals.

These broader approaches to the concept of the game and more flexible theories of the game do not imply that we will stop doing conventional, mathematical game theory and switch entirely into a new paradigmatic framework where games are created in the field by human action and ingenuity. Formal game theory is elegant and useful. But the game idea, in all the complexities suggested by Wittgenstein, Shepsle, and the theorists discussed earlier, need not be narrowly held by a single group of scholars but can, with the perspectives of microsociology, be seen as a philosophical exercise, much of the sort that Wittgenstein proposed. What would such an expanded game model contribute toward dealing with Pitkin's dilemma?

- *Intellectual coherence and order:* The game concept provides the everyday person with a framework that is entirely familiar yet newly understood. There are players, strategies, tactics, payoffs, alliances, good play, cheating, and so on. However, the terms apply off the ballfield, off the court, off the game board, and human interactions appear in a new light when there is a new attention to the other and a new definition of the self.
- *Equalization of participants:* There are no authority figures in the philosophically defined game, but only players: winners, and losers. The winners have no permanent status and no arbitrary rights; they may have won by virtue or by luck, and will have to face further encounters to prove their position. Similarly, the losers are temporary; they perhaps learn from the successful strategies of others, but they can define the game for themselves and by inventing new tactics may transform it.
- *One game doesn't make a season:* People win some, lose some, and live to fight another day. The game metaphor reminds people, even those who have lost regularly because of foul play on the part of their opponents, not to give up, not to disappoint their fans.
- *Strategy is decisive:* The individual may be poor in physical or social resources because of the accidents of past games, but can turn always to her or his own ability to out-think the opposition or seize a hitherto unnoticed opportunity.
- *Game ethics:* Fair play is a virtue recognizable by all players in everyday games. It may be honored sometimes only in the breach, but as players gain skill and judgment the value often grows in importance.⁴¹ But game theory as a metaphor retains the sharp edge of its rational choice origins; if the opposition cheats, even those who prefer fair play may want at least to consider going for the jugular.⁴²

How is such a micropolitical strategic approach different from standard game theory? It is diametrically opposite on the crucial dimension of analytic purpose. Technical game theory came to its flower in von Neumann and Morgenstern's theory of games, in which the whole mathematical point of the exercise was to 'solve' the game, to devise the right strategy for winning under all conditions (von Neumann and Morgenstern 1944). Decision theory and at least some of political economics had a similar concern: rigorous calculation of probabilities in order to achieve desired outcomes (Raiffa 1968; see also Luce and Raiffa 1957).

The Foucault approach, combined with the empirical infrastructure of Garfinkel, Goffman, and Schelling, takes as a major premise that there is no solution to the micropolitical gaming world they have defined. The interaction is ongoing and the outcomes unpredictable; players learn through their engagement in the

exercise, and the theorist's role is to watch carefully and intelligently, to understand the creative process as it unfolds. What is important about Foucault is perhaps less his emphasis on the ubiquity of politics than his insistence that women and men become strongly aware of the political nature of the everyday worlds within which they live. The very virtues of modern civilization, its openness and complexity, create the new challenges and, according to Foucault, individuals who fail to rise to their occasions may fail politically, existentially, or ethically. But the learning process is their own, and is left to their discretion.

Garfinkel's work sensitizes the innocent to the way the political field is constituted at bottom by apparently minor and unimportant bits and pieces of behavior that despite their seeming triviality serve as a basis for status within not only one's personal groups but the human group in general. Goffman then documents the small strategies through which groups emerge, cohere, control, and confront one another, and shows how status hierarchies emerge, maintain themselves, and sometimes collapse as the result of apparently small pressures. Schelling is the capstone of the model, showing that within the appalling richness of human interaction in time and circumstance it is possible to find analytic focus by a close attention to simple strategic concepts, such as players, resources, payoffs, and rules, and by a recognition of interactive patterns and strategies that control the resulting institutions of various political systems.

The strategic model defined here is spartan. It makes only one assumption: that people define themselves and their social institutions through their strategic interactive behavior. The model as developed through the theorists included in this chapter gives no specific advice, sets no preferred goals or strategies, is silent on outcomes and even on preferred ethical systems. The model offers a picture of how the world appears to work, but the picture is not prescriptive. The model asks only what actual people do, and have done, throughout various periods of history. Political theorists are then entitled to ask what have been the results of this process, and may wish to point out that certain behaviors entail certain results. If provided with such information, directly related to their perceived problems, individuals in the public at large might come to read and admire the work of political theorists.

Political science would profit from the same approach.⁴³ It would be a nice reintegration of a political science discipline too long split by methodological disputes, if political theory and empirically oriented political science worked together on understanding the wider shores of political experience. A great deal of intelligence, creativity, and courage is involved in political activity and, as I have tried to suggest, it is activity in which all women and men daily participate. That it be recognized as political, and that theorists and scientists may help in showing how it may be done well, expands the realm of democratic theory and raises the possibility that resolution of Pitkin's dilemma may not be completely beyond our reach.